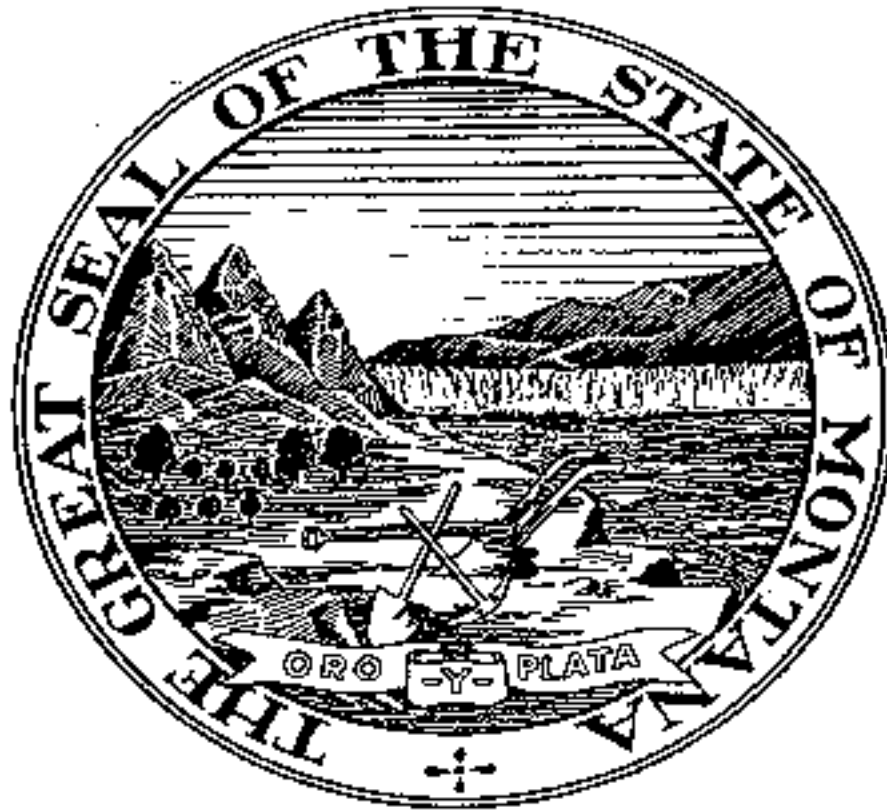


# Office Safety Guidelines

## Occupational Safety & Health Bureau



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## Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Prepared for Montana Employers  
by the

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# **Office Safety Guidelines**

Offices should be laid out for efficiency, convenience, and safety. Many office workers have been severely injured because simple safety rules and procedures are over-looked.

## **Safe Operating Procedures**

- 1) Running in offices should be prohibited.
- 2) Everyone should keep to the right when walking in passageways.
- 3) Convex mirrors should be placed and used in corners and other blind intersections.
- 4) People carrying material must be sure they can see over and around it when walking through the office.
- 5) When carrying material up or down stairs limit the size of the load so one hand is free to use a handrail.
- 6) Liquids and other foreign debris should be immediately cleaned up off the floor.
- 7) Remove any tripping hazards immediately, check for damaged carpet and bulged rugs.
- 8) Always maintain good housekeeping throughout the office.

## **Fire Protection**

- 1) Every office should have a posted emergency evacuation plan.
- 2) The emergency evacuation plan should be practiced on a regular basis.
- 3) Automatic fire detection systems should be in place and tested on a regular basis.
- 4) Fire extinguishers should be securely mounted and clearly identified.
- 5) All employees should know where all manual fire alarms are located.
- 6) Make sure emergency numbers are posted.
- 7) Keep combustible materials away from any heat source.

## **Exits**

- 1) All exits should be posted and illuminated.

- 2) Each exit door must allow for immediate exit from the building during occupancy.

### **Doors**

- 1) Approach a solid door away from the path of the opening door.
- 2) Reach for the doorknob so that if the door is suddenly opened from the other side, the hand receives the force of the impact rather than the face.
- 3) Open the door slowly, especially if the door opens outward.

### **Lighting**

- 1) All stairwells should be well illuminated to prevent trips and falls.
- 2) Detailed type work requires direct lighting to prevent eyestrain.
- 3) Use only UL approved desk lamps.
- 4) The facility should have emergency lighting by all exits.

### **Electrical**

- 1) A sufficient number of outlets should be installed to eliminate the need for extension cords.
- 2) Cords that must run across a walk area should be covered with rubber channels or other similar devices.
- 3) Cords should not rest on steam pipes or other hot or sharp metallic surfaces.
- 4) Outlets should accommodate 3-wire grounding plugs to help prevent electric shock.
- 5) Floor outlets should be located, so they are not tripping hazards, not be accidentally kicked, or used as a footrest.
- 6) Rest rooms are required to have ground fault circuit interrupters.
- 7) No current-carrying parts should be exposed.
- 8) Cords for electrically operated office machines, fans, lamps, and other equipment should be frequently inspected for defects.
- 9) Installation or repair of any electrical equipment should be done by qualified workers using only approved materials.

- 10) No furniture, equipment, or other heavy objects should be placed on any electric cord.

### **Floor Surfaces**

- 1) Floor finishes and waxes should be selected for slip-resistant qualities.
- 2) A well-maintained carpet provides good protection against slips and falls.
- 3) Defective floor surfaces should be immediately repaired.
- 4) Worn or warped mats under office chairs should be replaced.
- 5) Slip-resistant protection should be used on stairways and at lobby or elevator entrances.

### **Aisles and Stairs**

- 1) Aisles and stairs throughout the work area should be kept clear.
- 2) Storage of material in aisles and stairs should be prohibited.
- 3) All stairs four or more steps high are required to have secure railings on both sides.

### **Storage**

- 1) Materials should be stored in areas specifically set aside for the purpose of storage.
- 2) Materials should be neatly stacked or piled in stable piles that will not fall over.
- 3) The heaviest and largest pieces should be on the bottom of the pile or the lower shelves of storage units.
- 4) Appropriate stepladders should be provided and used to reach objects over the employee's head.
- 5) Flammable materials should be stored in an approved metal flammable cabinet.

### **Safe Office Equipment**

#### **Chairs:**

- 1) Casters on chairs should be securely fixed.

- 2) Chairs should be purchased with easy-to-adjust seat heights and back supports.
- 3) Employees should be shown how to properly adjust their chairs.

#### **Office Machines:**

- 1) Some machines have external moving parts and employees should be trained on their safe operations.
- 2) All office machines should be inspected regularly for defective or worn parts.

#### **Filing cabinets:**

- 1) All file drawers should be immediately closed after use.
- 2) Use the drawer handle to close the cabinet.
- 3) Never close drawers with your feet.
- 4) Only one file drawer should be open at one time.
- 5) Don't open a file drawer if someone is in immediate danger.

### **Parking Lots and Sidewalks**

- 1) Parking lots and sidewalks must be maintained, debris removed, potholes filled, uneven surfaces corrected, and adequate lighting.
- 2) During cold weather, effective snow and ice removal controls should be used.
- 3) Public access to the facility should be well lit.

### **Office Ergonomics**

- 1) Computer monitors should be placed directly in front of the user while at the keyboard.
- 2) Position the top of the monitor screen at or below eye level and about an arm's length away.
- 3) Tilt or swivel the monitor screen to eliminate reflections on the screen or use an anti-glare filter.
- 4) Use task lighting to illuminate documents properly.

- 5) Use a document holder to place documents as close to the computer screen as possible
- 6) Workers should have ample clearance to move knees and legs under their workstation.
- 7) Adjust the keyboard and chair height to keep forearms, wrists and hands in a straight line while using the keyboard.
- 8) For proper posture at their workstation workers should maintain a 90-degree or greater angle at the hips and knees.
- 9) During the heating season maintain an office temperature between 68 and 74 degrees Fahrenheit and relative humidity at or above 25%.
- 10) During the summer months temperature should be maintained between 73 and 78 degrees Fahrenheit and relative humidity at or below 68%.
- 11) Locate light sources beside, rather than in front of the operator.

### **State Occupational Safety and Health Consultation Project**

A source of assistance with construction and general industry safety and health is the Montana Onsite Consultation Project. This division of the Department of Labor and Industry operates independently of OSHA's enforcement branch. The program was developed with small businesses in mind, and is available to private sector employers who want help in recognizing and correcting jobsite hazards.

When an employer uses the service, a trained occupational safety and health professional conducts a free onsite "inspection" and consultation. No citations or penalties are given for any of the problems that the inspector/consultant may find, and the service is completely confidential. The employer has the responsibility and obligation through the program to correct the identified hazards within an allotted amount of time. In addition, the consultant can assist in developing and maintaining an effective safety program, offer jobsite training and education for employees, and help locate other sources of assistance for safety and health concerns.

Although this program can be beneficial, you must realize that there is still no guarantee that a jobsite that has received the consultation services will "pass" an OSHA inspection. For information about Montana's Onsite Consultation Project please contact:

Safety & Health Bureau  
Department of Labor and Industry  
P.O. Box 1728  
Helena, MT 59624-1728  
(406) 444-6401

## N. Resources

Additional information about occupational safety and health standards and regulations can be obtained from:

1. U.S. Department of Labor, **Occupational Safety & Health Administration, (OSHA)**.  
Public Affairs Office- Room 3647, 200 Constitution Ave., Ashington, D.C. 20210.  
Phone: 1-202-693-1999.  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)
2. **National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, (NIOSH)**. Department of Health and Human Services,  
200 Independence Ave. SW 317B, Washington, DC 20201.  
Phone: 1-800-356-4674, 1-800-35-NIOSH  
[www.niosh.gov](http://www.niosh.gov)
3. **American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists, (ACGIH)**.  
1330 Kemper Meadow Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45240-1634.  
Phone: 1-513-742-2020, Fax: 1-513-742-3355  
[www.acgih.org](http://www.acgih.org)
4. **American National Standards Institute, (ANSI)**.  
11 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036.  
Phone: 1-212-642-4900, Fax: 1-212-398-0023  
[www.ansi.org](http://www.ansi.org)
5. **National Fire Protection Association, (NFPA)**.  
P.O. Box 9101, One Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02269-9101.  
Phone: 1-800-344-3555, Fax: 1-617-770-0700  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)
6. **Department of Energy, (DOE)**.  
Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Ave. SW.  
Washington, DC 20585.  
[www.doe.gov](http://www.doe.gov)
7. **National Safety Council**,  
1121 Spring Lake Drive, Itasca, IL 60143-3201  
Phone: 1-630-285-1121, Fax: 1-630-285-1315  
[www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)